

Wildflower Weekend – 2006 Schedule

Saturday, May 13

Birds and Blossoms of Pocosin

8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Celebrate the return of migrating songbirds to Shenandoah on this gentle hike. Look and listen for scarlet tanagers, cerulean warblers, redstarts and many more as you identify wildflowers along the fire road to the ruins of Pocosin Mission. 2 miles. Total climb: about 400 ft. Meet at Pocosin parking area (mile 59.5, **unmarked**, east side of Skyline Drive). **Limited parking.**

Diane Holsinger, Volunteer Naturalist

Marvelous Millers Head

9:30 a.m. to noon

Hike down a rocky ridge to the observation platform at Millers Head (elev. 3,465 ft.), and a wonderful view of the Shenandoah Valley. On this granitic rock formation you may find some uncommon plants that don't grow on most Central District trails that are underlain by basalt. Steep uphill return. 1.6 mile. Total climb: about 450 ft. Meet at Millers Head trailhead: from Skyline Drive, turn into **south** entrance to Skyland (mile 42.5), pass stables and keep to left when road forks; park at top of hill.

Nick Fisichelli, Lead Botany Technician, Shenandoah National Park

Wildflower Identification for Beginners

10 to 11:30 a.m.

If wildflowers are casual acquaintances that you'd like to get to know better, this program's for you. Learn characteristics of some flower families and key out flowers using a field guide. Meet at Milam Gap parking area (mile 52.8) for a slow-paced stroll.

Mara Meisel, Park Ranger, Shenandoah National Park

Bugs and Blooms

11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Children's program. (Repeats at 2 p.m.)

Through fun-filled activities, discover how plants and insects rely on each other in the Big Meadow. _ mile. Meet in front of Byrd Visitor Center (milepost 51).

Mathew Klozik, Park Ranger, Shenandoah National Park

***Spring Birds**

12:30 to 2 p.m.

The high mountain springs here (elev. 2,665 ft.) served local residents and travelers walking across the Blue Ridge years ago. Now the wetland forest habitat attracts various species of birds. See who's flitting and singing around the springs on this gentle walk.

Meet at Gravel Springs parking area in the park's North District (mile 17.6). **Limited parking.**

Alan Williams, Ecologist/Data Manager, Shenandoah National Park

Wonders of the Mill Prong

1 to 3:30 p.m.

Changes in elevation, aspect and forest type make this a reliable trail for a variety of wildflowers. The Mill Prong, one of the headstreams of the Rapidan River, joins the trail partway down, splashing its way to President Hoover's former fishing retreat, Rapidan Camp. Steep in places; three small stream crossings. 4.1 miles. Total climb: about 870 ft. Meet at Milam Gap parking area (mile 52.8).

Tom Dierauf, Volunteer Naturalist

Bugs and Blooms

2 to 3:30 p.m. Children's program. (See description of 11 a.m. program.)

Lewis Mountain Stroll

4:30 to 6 p.m. (Repeats on Sunday)

Look for woodland marvels such as jack-in-the-pulpit, blue cohosh and wood betony on this short hike southward along the Appalachian Trail. Stretch your legs on this easy walk. _ mile. Meet at Lewis Mountain Picnic Area (mile 57.5).

Mara Meisel, Park Ranger, Shenandoah National Park

Sunday, May 14

***Birding at Beahms Gap**

8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Watch and listen for various species of birds attracted to the diverse habitat here. On the east side of Skyline Drive is a rich, young forest that's still changing over from pastureland. The west side has more mature oak trees and less understory. A seepage area is an added attraction. Meet at Beahms Gap Overlook, in the park's North District (mile 28.5) for a gentle walk.

Alan Williams, Ecologist/Data Manager, Shenandoah National Park

South River Falls Hike

9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Violets, wild geraniums, phacelias and many more wildflowers greet hikers on this delightful trail to a waterfall viewpoint. There could be a surprise around every switchback of this strenuous but lovely hike. 3.3 miles. Total climb: about 910 ft. Meet at trailhead in South River Picnic Area (mile 62.8). Bring snack or lunch.

Betty Rosson, Volunteer Naturalist

***Appalachian Trail Discovery Hike**

10 a.m. to noon

Discover what's blooming on a gentle section of the Appalachian Trail, as we follow it northward from Milam Gap to Lewis Spring. Find out some of the fascinating history of the famous 2,174-mile hiking trail along the way. Ride van back to cars. 1.5 mile. Meet at Milam Gap parking area (mile 52.8).

Mara Meisel, Park Ranger, Shenandoah National Park

Gravel Springs-Bluff Trail Walk

1 to 3:30 p.m.

By popular demand, extra time has been added to the hike this year! Join our park botanist for a gentle walk designed for beginner wildflower enthusiasts. After a brief introduction to botany basics, explore the spring area, then hike along part of the Bluff Trail. 2 miles. Total climb: about 200 ft. Meet at Gravel Springs Gap (mile 17.6) in the park's North District. **Limited parking.**

Wendy Cass, Botanist, Shenandoah National Park

***Butterflies in the Meadow**

2 to 3:30 p.m.

What's the difference between a spring azure and a pearl crescent? Learn some butterfly identification basics, then take a stroll in the Big Meadows area in search of Shenandoah's early-season butterflies. Along the way, discover how particular butterfly species depend on certain native flowers to survive. Bring binoculars, if you have them. Meet in front of Byrd Visitor Center, Milepost 51.

Mara Meisel, Park Ranger, Shenandoah National Park

Wildflowers "On the Rocks"

2 to 4 p.m.

Walk through ancient lava flows and volcanic ash deposits, now wearing mossy coats, along the Appalachian Trail from Timber Hollow to Crescent Rock Overlook. This is one of the few trails in the park where you can see three distinct bedrock types within a mile. Discover how different rocks and soil affect plants that grow here. 1.2 mile. Total climb: about 200 ft. Meet at Timber Hollow Overlook (mile 43.3). Ride van back to cars.

Sue Schaefer and Sally Hurlbert, Park Rangers, Shenandoah National Park

Lewis Mountain Stroll

4:30 to 6 p.m. (See Saturday's description)

* Indicates programs that are new this year.